

**Short Story Analysis**

Dr. Lugo

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Peter Cortés – 586541

Introduction

The stories to be compared are ‘Thank you, Ma’am’ by Langston Hughes and ‘The Woman Who Tried to be Good’ by Edna Ferber. These stories talk about different kinds of women in different contexts. The first story talks, ‘Thank you, Ma’am’, talks about a woman that gets mugged by a teenager and she teaches his a lesson. The other story, talks about a woman that is being margined by the small town and even when she tries her best the people still not accept her. Both stories are compared using some literary theories.

Analysis

In the story ‘Thank you, Ma’am’, the main character characters are the large lady and the boy. In the beginning of the story, the boy tries to steal from her and she doesn’t want to let go. In this part we see some oppression from the lady because even though the boy tried to steal from her, she wouldn’t let him go. To this we could apply the Marxism genre because the woman had the boy in her power and she wanted to teach him a lesson. “She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse.” (Thank you, Ma’am, L. Hughes) The large lady can also be the archetype of a large crafty woman who is always caring and family oriented because she does teaches the boy a lesson in the end.

The other story is narrated by a person from the town in which the story develops. It talks about a lady that is as avoided by the people as a leper. This woman is described in many ways so it is difficult to be set an archetypal that isn’t savior or heroine, yet she is marginal. In the beginning the woman tries to change her ways. It is presumed that she is a prostitute but the story never says what exactly her ‘flaw’ is. The people in the town talk really bad about her, the wives fear her and the men get nervous around her. This woman is a feminist figure because in the story it is told that she had to work for her living but not only for her, but for a child her ex-husband left her with.

In the climax of the first story, we get the description of the large lady and her background; again, this fits her archetype. Her role is the one of a typical ‘traditional’ woman who does a ‘female’ job such as working on a hair salon. Then this story is concluded with the boy, Roger, learning his lesson and right when he leaves happily, he hesitates to thank the lady and they never meet again.

The other story has a more detailed and dramatic climax and conclusion. The woman changes her ways and becomes a typical woman of the town, people still rejected her. She stopped being extravagant and started to dress more conventional. Even after these changes, she proved she could do anything without a man and so much more, but still she was all alone. She is portrayed as a very powerful feminine figure. This story talks about feminist figure but the town is very structured and something out of place bothers its citizens.

Conclusion

These stories are not similar but they do share some strong female characters with different characteristic and personalities. Both stories develop in completely different settings, but from each you can learn something really good or just observe the hypocritical reality of today society. In the first story, the boy could have been exited by what his lesson got him that forgot to say thanks. It doesn’t necessarily mean he was ungrateful. The woman in the second story is very touching. Even after all she went through, after a few rejections from the people she didn’t quit trying to fit in. I don’t thing she was trying to gain the people exactly, but it is more like she was trying to change her way of life for her own good.